



# Administrative Office of the Courts

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## **Judicial Branch testimony in favor of LD 113, An Act to Provide Funding for Guardians Ad Litem:**

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Julie Finn and I represent the Judicial Branch. I would like to provide testimony in support of this bill.

The Judicial Branch supports providing funding for guardians ad litem (GALs) in family matters cases. As you know, funding for GALs in child protection cases, guardianship matters, adoptions, and non-child protective termination matters is already provided by the State and is part of the Judicial Branch budget.

Family matters may include cases under Title 19-A, such as divorce, parental rights and responsibilities, de-facto parentage, and grandparent visitation. In these cases, GALs are appointed by a judge and are paid by the parties. The appointment order specifies the GAL's duties and the length of time for GAL participation. The duties often include making recommendations about parent-child contact and visitation and the child's primary residence.

The appointment of a GAL often leads to a faster resolution of the issues, particularly in cases in which one or more parties are unrepresented by counsel. The GAL's services also prompt agreed-upon resolutions thereby freeing up court time and resources.

In many cases, the parties cannot afford the cost of GAL services. In some of the most pressing, GALs may agree to serve pro bono, without compensation. There are many more cases in which the parties and the judge would appreciate the services and recommendations of a GAL but the appointment is not made due to a lack of funds. The Judicial Branch supports this bill if it would provide funding for some of these cases.

We are happy to assist the Committee in any way that we can.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer your questions.